

## **Thomas R. Wilkey**

### **Biography**

Tom Wilkey thought he had successfully retired when he stepped down as the executive director of the New York State Board of Elections in 2003. After all, he had observed his 34<sup>th</sup> year in election administration, working on everything from counting ballots to developing voting system standards to working to craft the most sweeping election reform in our nation's history.

Wilkey was the perfect candidate to become the first permanent executive director of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, the new federal entity created by the law he helped craft, the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

After his brief career as an elementary teacher, Wilkey joined the Erie County Board of Elections (Buffalo, New York) in November 1968 as an elections clerk. He subsequently rose to the position of senior election deputy prior to joining the New York State Board of Elections in 1979 as public information officer.

In 1985, Wilkey was promoted to the newly created position of director of elections operations, which was formed to administer oversight of New York's 57 county boards. His new duties included personal visits to those county boards, thus enabling him to see first-hand the dynamics of New York's network of diverse local elections offices. Criss-crossing the state to review jurisdictions servicing the smallest constituency (4,400) and the largest (3.3 million), Wilkey shared his problem-resolution skills and expertise at each opportunity. His responsibilities soon grew to include the creation and supervision of New York's voting systems certification program. In 2005, the certification process will be transferred to EAC as mandated by HAVA. This marks the first time a federal entity will be responsible for the certification of voting systems.

Wilkey was appointed the second executive director of the New York State Board of Elections in June of 1992 – a position he held until August of 2003.

Wilkey has been associated with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) for many years. In 1983, he served on the Voting Systems Standards Committee, which drafted and reviewed the FEC's Voting System Standards, a voluntary testing, qualification and certification process used for all voting systems in the United States.

In 1992, Wilkey was appointed to the FEC's Advisory Panel, which consisted of 20 state, county and local election administrators. It advised the FEC on clearinghouse projects and allocation of funds for election administration projects.

During 1983, Wilkey and a small group of election administrators from throughout the country pushed for the creation of the International Center on Election Law. Today, the Center represents more than 1,000 foreign, state, county and local election officials. His involvement led to his appointment as chair of the Center's Professional Development Committee, which now runs the first university-based professional development program

for election officials. In 1995, Wilkey was recognized for his service by his appointment to the Board of Directors of the Center.

An early proponent of the creation of the National Association of State Election Directors, Wilkey has served as secretary, treasurer, vice president and was elected president for 1996-1997. In January 1997, Wilkey was named chair of NASED's Independent Test Authority Accreditation Board, which reviews and approves laboratories and technical groups for the testing of voting systems under NASED's national accreditation program. He was reappointed as chair in February 2000.

An early an active promoter of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), Wilkey has served as chair of the NVRA Committee of NASED and as a member of the FEC Ad Hoc Discussion Group for NVRA.

In 1998, the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Federal Voting Assistance Program named Wilkey to its State and Local Alliance Board. The Board advises the Federal Voting Assistance Program about ongoing programs to support and facilitate absentee voting requirements for more than six million military and overseas voters.

Following the 2000 general election, Wilkey was named to several national commissions to study election reform, including those representing the National Association of Secretaries of State, National Association of Counties, Council of State Governments and the Election Center. Beginning in May 2001, Wilkey was asked by the FEC to assist with the drafting revised federal Voting System Standards, due for completion in April 2002. In addition, Wilkey was actively involved with the development of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, which Congress passed and the President signed into law in October 2002.

Long active in church activities, Wilkey is a member of St. Vincent De Paul parish in Albany. From 1999 to 2002, Wilkey served on the Pastoral Council for the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and was a member of its choir. He also established an endowment to the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester – the Thomas R. Wilkey Heritage Project – which provides funding to restore and preserve its archival collections and documents of their many ministries.